

Hackney remembers anti-racism hero



Blair Peach died in an anti-National Front riot in Southall in 1979

Beth Mellor

AN anti-racism campaigner from Hackney will be commemorated on the 30th anniversary of his death.

Blair Peach, a special needs teacher who lived on Victoria Park Road, died from severe head injuries at a rally against the National Front in Southall in April 1979 after fighting broke out between the police

and demonstrators.

Witnesses at the scene said that Mr Peach was fatally hit with a baton by a member of the Metropolitan Police Special Patrol Group and left lying unconscious on the

ground. Yet the verdict returned at the inquest in 1980 was one of 'death by misadventure'; a ruling which campaign group, The Friends of Blair Peach continue to dispute.

The anniversary of his tragic death is a poignant reminder that, despite being one of London's most racially diverse boroughs, Hackney cannot afford to be complacent about the threat of racism and fascism.

The British National Party is campaigning hard in London to win a seat for the region in June's European Parliamentary elections. To achieve this, the far-right party only needs to gain eight per cent of the votes.

Hackney's Trades Union Congress this week launched a voter registration drive to ensure that the far-right party is not able to replicate the success it had in the 2008 Greater London Authority elections, when Richard Barnbrook won a seat.

According to John Page, campaign organiser for the TUC, there are up to 14,000 residents in the borough – mainly ethnic minorities – who are not registered to vote.

Terry Fitzpatrick, a representative of The Friends of Blair Peach, says that the creeping threat of the far-right means that the death of Blair Peach continues to have significance today. "We still confront the same threat from organised racism and fascism that Blair gave his life opposing," he said.

Mr Peach was a member of the Socialist Teachers' Association and the Socialist Workers' Party.

Friends and colleagues will commemorate his life with a dinner held at the school where he used to teach in Bow, East London.

Revealed: Hackney's biggest slice of the Olympic dream

A DESIGN for a £355m Olympic Media Centre in Hackney Wick has been unveiled this week. The centre will house 20,000 broadcasters, photographers and journalists during the games and will leave 900,000 sq ft. of business space for use after 2012. Sebastian Coe, chairman

of the London 2012 Organising Committee said: "The facilities we have planned will give us the best possible foundations for the media to tell all the stories from the London 2012 Games while leaving high performance workspace in legacy for the east of London."

